



Best Practices 2000

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Building a Better Tomorrow 2000

Over the past two years, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has undergone a marked transformation in the way it conducts business. This change required a fundamental, dramatic shift from an old styled bureaucracy to a more streamlined, customer service oriented approach. But we in the Southwest, and all of HUD, took on the challenge and made a personal commitment to reform and improve our delivery of services. Our first responsibility is to help people and communities empower themselves. So, today's HUD, more strongly

geared toward customer service than ever, is also more effective than ever.

Our successes have been many. We have forged partnerships with local governments, communities and the private sector to a level previously unheard of in government affairs. We have helped communities lift themselves up through grassroots actions by empowering communities and individuals. And, through the restructuring of field organizations to include community empowerment teams, we are setting a foundation to perpetuate the unified, one-HUD approach to meeting community needs.

We have accomplished much in this, only the second year of HUD 2020 Management Reform. The next 10 years hold great promise, and HUD is committed to working with our partners and continuing to provide a high level of service.

Even though our traditional goals remain the same — fighting for fair

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Louis Ybarra, Acting Secretary's Representative Southwest

Effective Techniques of Top Performers!

Galveston Housing Authority Recovery Project: Breathing Life Back into a "Troubled" Agency

In 1996, the Galveston Housing Authority (GHA) in Galveston, Texas was in trouble. Many of its properties were in disrepair, public housing residents had lost faith in the Authority, and HUD had designated it as a "troubled" agency. To remedy the situation, GHA began by assembling a task force team to reorganize and revitalize the Authority.

In less than a year's time, with focused teamwork and dedication to a common goal, the team reorganized GHA and increased the Authority's

Public Housing Management Assessment Program score by 33 points, from 43 to 76, and removed GHA from HUD's "troubled" list. Only a year later, GHA had improved its score even further, bumping it up to 94.

How did they do it? A team of dedicated individuals, pulling for the same goal made it happen. Composed of members of the GHA Board of Commissioners, a new executive director and GHA staff, personnel from HUD's Office of Troubled Agency Recovery (OTAR), professional consultants, fee accountants and a public relations firm, the team aggressively set about transforming the "troubled" GHA into a venerable model housing authority.

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Grassroots Efforts Lead to New Laws That Benefit Low-Income Housing

The Norman Affordable Housing Partnership (NOAH) developed a plan to address the shortages of low-income housing in their community. Through grassroots efforts, NOAH became the first housing authority in Oklahoma to be certified by HUD and receive federal funding.

Working with a HUD consultant, NOAH formed collaborations with city and local organizations. As a result of these grassroots partnerships, the organization was able to successfully change state law to allow 50-year leases (previously only five years)

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“What makes the GHA Recovery project unique is the focus—the extreme focus by all parties from HUD, the field office, and the housing authority staff—on removing the Authority from the ‘troubled’ list,” said Sharon Strain, executive director of the Galveston Housing Authority.

The Galveston Housing Authority Recovery project was an exercise in teamwork. The success of the project hinged on the team’s ability to overcome a number of barriers:

- Ironing out differences of opinion within the Authority and community at large,
- Settling race-related issues,
- Contending with a high staff turnover rate, and
- Educating new staff to rebuild the Authority.

Reorganizing the Authority to develop the most efficient and effective policies and operational processes required the cooperation of all parties involved.



New GHA staff promptly took ownership of the problems facing the agency and completed the build-out of the Island Community Center (ICC), in which GHA is housed. A new-found confidence in the agency’s leadership allowed staff to quickly fill GHA’s new 81,000 square-foot ICC with community partner agencies, including the Texas Workforce Commission and Galveston College, both of which have brought new opportunities to GHA residents.

“The GHA Recovery project is a model partnership between HUD and a local housing authority,” said Strain, “because we significantly cut down the time that it takes a housing authority to get off HUD’s ‘troubled’ list.”

Once GHA regained its status, OTAR and the HUD Houston field office worked closely with GHA to reinstate defaulted grant funding, which allowed for the demolition of crime-ridden vacant public housing and the building of 30 single-family home units, a new community center, and 48 scattered-site public housing island cottages.

A public relations consultant helped launch an extensive information campaign to eliminate communication barriers and spread the message that GHA had been revitalized and restored as a valuable and trustworthy asset to the community.

“The Galveston Housing Authority Recovery project proves that even



a housing authority that has had its image tarnished by adverse publicity can work to regain the confidence of its residents and once again become a positive asset to its community,” said Strain.

The GHA continues to build on its improved image and level of trust in its community. Press coverage continues to be positive, strengthening the residents’ confidence in the Authority. Thanks in part to GHA’s new image, the agency was able to recruit lenders from local banks within the Galveston community to assist prospective homebuyers in purchasing the 30 single-family home units.

The Galveston community is very enthusiastic about other GHA programs as well. GHA’s new summer program for children proved a great accomplishment and is now serving as a model for similar programs in the City of Galveston.

“This project was a success because both HUD and GHA recognized the problem, rolled up their sleeves and worked together to turn the agency around,” said Strain. ♦



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housing, increasing affordable housing and homeownership, reducing homelessness, promoting jobs and economic opportunity, empowering people and communities and restoring the public trust — the primary emphasis has shifted away from HUD central, focusing instead on those working in the communities.

EMPOWERMENT

No longer are directives issued to communities, but rather a bottom-up, community-driven management style has been implemented to empower communities and individuals. By providing tools to implement revitalization strategies through various methodologies, we have empowered groups to find the best solutions for their needs — after all, no two communities are alike and no one

solution will work for all. It is the partnership efforts of communities, private sector and governments working together that builds strength and helps communities to move forward.

RESTORING PUBLIC TRUST

By consolidating and reorganizing programs, HUD has been able to more efficiently meet the needs of its constituents. In communities across the country, funds have been used to effectively empower individuals — and thus these efforts have begun to restore the public trust.

Community partnerships are an investment in the future that will build a better tomorrow for everyone.

BEST PRACTICES

Through the “Best Practices” initiative, we showcase the practices

that are models of success in empowerment and building trust, as well as in the other areas important to HUD. Because of the success of the Best Practices initiative, HUD can now document true successes in the industry that can be used as prototypes for others.

Best practices is an ideal information tool for distributing ideas that work to others across the country.

But, it doesn’t end with those practices that have been started and emulated thus far. Your successes will continue to be showcased and replicated through the Best Practices 2000 initiative. By sharing your successes with others, your legacy lives on and everyone benefits from your best practices. ♦



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on state property and to allow the construction of much-needed Section 811 properties.

NOAH improved the collaborative process through which the private sector, the city of Norman and other nonprofit housing organizations could build over 200 units of affordable housing for the elderly, chronically mentally ill and other people in need. By building such a large number of units, NOAH also incurred large

economies of scale in purchasing materials in bulk and building in large volume.

NOAH took steps to destigmatize low-income housing in the community. It emphasized higher-quality facilities by increasing maintenance on the properties and brought the maintenance processes in-house to ensure greater accountability. Both landlords and tenants attended training sessions in order to more fully understand their responsibilities as members of the community.

NOAH’s development plan has fostered a win-win situation for all parties involved. Low-income residents will benefit from the new housing opportunities, the community can look forward to experiencing stable, long-term economic development, and the local government will benefit from an increased property and sales tax base, while real estate



professionals can enjoy increasing their business with the new home sales.

The success of the program has resulted in several featured articles by local and state newspapers. Commenting on the success of NOAH’s plan, Kay Absher stated, “the key to our success has been not taking ‘No’ for an answer.” ♦



Best Practices 2000

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- Linda Cianco, Editor-in-Chief
- Francine Sutton, Editor
- Paulette Ceophas, Distribution

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How To Contact Us

Best Practices HELP Desk — Just A
Phone Call Away: 202/708-1992

Fax No. 202/708-2538

Newsletter Editor Telephone:
202/708-1027

Newsletter Editor e-mail address:
Francine_Sutton@hud.gov

Web Site Address:
<http://www.hud.gov/bestpractices.html>

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Management and Planning
409 Third Street, S.W., Suite 310
Washington, DC 20024

Address Service Requested